

Message Text

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43

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-10 CU-04 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 PA-04 PRS-01 CPR-02 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 DRC-01 /072 W
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O 031435Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2122

INFO AMCONSUL DOUALA VIA POUCH

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE YAOUNDE 3934

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL

SUBJECT: RETURN OF AFO-A-KOM

REF: YAOUNDE 3924, STATE 235660

1. HAVE JUST RECEIVED INFORMATION THAT STATUE WILL BE BROUGHT TO YAOUNDE BY DIRECT CONNECTION FROM DOUALA EVENING DEC 4. GURC ARRANGING CEREMONY 11 AM DECEMBER 5, AT WHICH STATUE WILL BE TURNED OVER IN YAOUNDE RPT YAOUNDE TO FON OF KOM WHO HAS BEEN BROUGHT HERE TODAY FOR EVENT. STATUE TO BE PLACED ON EXHIBITION IN YAOUNDE FOR INDEFINITE PERIOD. IT NOT CLEAR WHEN OR WHETHER IT WILL BE RETURNED TO LAIKOM. MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE HAS STATED THAT "STATUE NOT GOING BACK TO LAIKOM AT LEAST AT PRESENT." DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL AFFAIRS AT MININFO TOLD EMBOFF STATUE WOULD BE RETURNED TO LAIKOM "MUCH LATER," BUT NO DECISION YET MADE ON DETAILS.

2. MININFO AND CULTURE MADE POINT TO AMBASSADOR THAT GURC REGARDS STATUE AS BEING RETURNED TO NATION (CAMEROON) AND NOT PEOPLE (KOM). COMMENT: IT CLEAR FROM MINISTER'S REMARKS AND GURC PLANS AS LAID OUT TO US THAT PRESIDENCY HAS TAKEN INTENTIONAL DECISION KEEP STATUE AT LEAST FOR PRESENT AS PART OF NATIONAL HERITAGE AND CONSCIOUSLY WISHES
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MINIMIZE TRIBAL ASPECT.

3. WE REALIZE THIS DECISION WILL CAUSE DISAPPOINTMENT AND PERHAPS EMBARRASSMENT AMONG AMERICANS INVOLVED IN OBTAINING THIS SACRED OBJECT FOR RETURN TO KOM PEOPLE AND HOPE THAT ITS "TEMPORARY" RETENTION IN YAOUNDE WILL NOT CAUSE PROBLEMS OR ATTRACT UNFAVORABLE PUBLICITY. IN ANY CASE THIS GURC DECISION BASED ON ITS PERCEPTION OF NATIONAL NEEDS AND IS NOT FOR US TO ARGUE WITH. WE HAVE POINTED OUT PUBLICITY IMPLICATIONS AT PRESIDENCY (SENGAT KUO) AND WITH MININFO. THEY WELL AWARE OF THIS BUT PLACE INTERNAL POLITICAL FACTORS AHEAD OF FOREIGN PUBLICITY.

4. GURC PLANNING (AND WE ENDORSE IDEA) HAVE WARREN ROBBINS GIVE SLIDE LECTURE AT CAMEROONIAN CULTURAL CENTER LATER IN DAY OF DECEMBER 5. SINCE IT APPEARS THAT ROBBINS WILL BE IN YAOUNDE FOR ENTIRE CAMEROON STAY, USIS WILL PROGRAM HIM HERE FOR ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES.

5. DEPARTMENT/USIA MAY WISH ALERT ACCOMPANYING JOURNALISTS OF GURC PLANS KEEP STATUE IN YAOUNDE FOR TIME BEING, IN CASE THIS NEWS SHOULD CAUSE THEM TO CHANGE PLANS TO ACCOMPANY. WE HAVE ALERTED MININFO THAT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN. WE CAN GIVE NO ASSURANCES THAT GURC WOULD GRANT PERMISSION FOR JOURNALISTS TO VISIT KOM KINGDOM, SHOULD THEY WISH TO GO THERE DESPITE ABSENCE OF STATUE.
MOORE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 DEC 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973YAOUND03934
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: YAOUNDE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731248/aaaabjbj.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: YAOUNDE 3924, STATE 235660
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 FEB 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01-Feb-2002 by collinp0>; APPROVED <20 FEB 2002 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RETURN OF AFO-A-KOM
TAGS: SCUL, CM
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005